

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Ulysses S. Grant to Abraham Lincoln, August 23, 1863

Cairo Illinois

August 23d 1863.

Sir:

Your letter of the 9th inst. reached me at Vicksburg just as I was about starting for this place. Your letter of the 13th of July was also duly received.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Collected Works*, VI, 326, and Lincoln to Grant, August 9, 1863.

After the fall of Vicksburg I did incline very much to an immediate move on Mobile. I believed then the place could be taken with but little effort, and with the rivers debouching there, in our possession, we would have such a base to operate from on the very center of the Confederacy as would make them abandon entirely the states bound West by the Miss. I see however the importance of a movement into Texas just at this time.

I have reinforced Gen. Banks<sup>2</sup> with the 13th Army corps comprising ten Brigades of Infantry with a full proportion of Artillery.

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<sup>2</sup> Nathaniel P. Banks

I have given the subject of arming the negro my hearty support. This, with the emancipation of the negro, is the heaviest blow yet given the Confederacy. The South care a great deal about it and profess to be very angry. But they were united in their action before and with the negro under subjection could spare their entire white population for the field. Now they complain that nothing can be got out of their negroes.

There has been great difficulty in getting able bodied negroes to fill up the colored regiments in consequence of the rebel cavalry runing off all that class to Georgia and Texas. This is especially the case for a distance of fifteen or twenty miles on each side of the river. I am now however sending two expeditions into Louisiana, one from Natchez to Harrisonburg and one from Goodrich's Landing to Monroe, that I expect will bring back a large number. I have ordered recruiting officers to accompany these expeditions. I am also moving a Brigade of Cavalry from Tennessee to Vicksburg

which will enable me to move troops to a greater distance into the interior and will facilitate materially the recruiting service.

Gen. Thomas<sup>3</sup> is now with me and you may rely on it I will give him all the aid in my power. I would do this whether the arming the negro seemed to me a wise policy or not, because it is an order that I am bound to obey and do not feel that in my position I have a right to question any policy of the Government. In this particular instance there is no objection however to my expressing an honest conviction. That is, by arming the negro we have added a powerful ally. They will make good soldiers and taking them from the enemy weaken him in the same proportion they strengthen us. I am therefore most decidedly in favor of pushing this policy to the enlistment of a force sufficient to hold all the South falling into our hands and to aid in capturing more.

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3 Lorenzo Thomas

Thanking you very kindly for the great favors you have ever shown me I remain, very truly and respectfully

your obt. svt.

U. S. Grant

Maj. Gen.